

“This is the Information Age.... Parks are created to a higher standard; the National Park Service should be held to a higher standard. The Park Service must take whatever steps are required to secure the information needed to make sound management decisions.”

Dr. Robin Winks, environmental scholar and former chair, National Park System Advisory Board

Scientific Information for Management

A mountain lion at Grand Canyon National Park triggers an infrared camera used in the noninvasive study of the large carnivore species. Self-portraits like this can often be correlated with specific tracks, hair, or feces left behind at sampling stations, adding another dimension to the study of lion kinship, food sources, and home range.



NPS PHOTO

The National Park Service needs the best information science can offer to manage the national parks. In recent years—partly as a result of the National Parks Omnibus Management Act of 1998, a broadening commitment to meet this need among park managers, and increased funding from the Natural Resource Challenge—parks have made substantial progress in this area. Many small parks have hired their first natural resource manager, and increased expertise is resulting in better identification of information needs and a greater capacity to interpret and apply scientific information. Baseline inventories continue to deliver important fundamental information for management, and monitoring networks are now organizing to track long-term trends in park natural resources. Parks, too, are becoming friendlier places for researchers to do their work thanks to the developing network of research and learning centers and the streamlining of research permitting. Collaboration through partnerships and the Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Units remains critically important to scientific endeavors in parks, providing expertise, cost-sharing, and creative problem solving. The following articles give us a glimpse into this world of scientific information in 2002 that is as fascinating as it is fundamental to park management.

Intro